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S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 1236

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: ELAB, PINS, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: DISAPPEARANCE OF LOCAL POWER UNION LEADER

REPT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR JOHN O'GRADY

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1199

1. ELMER FOSTER, IMF-FIET SECRETARY GENERAL, HAS REQUESTED THAT HE TRANSMIT FOLLOWING PERSONAL MESSAGE ON URGENT BASIS TO RETAIL CLERKS INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR GEORGE O'KEEFE AND TO AFL-CIO'S ANDY MCLELLAN: "IT IS URGENT THAT THE AFL-CIO SEND CABLES TO PRESIDENT VIDELA AND TO THE JUNTA MILITAR EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LUZ Y FUERZA UNION LEADER OSCAR SMITH AND EXPRESSING HOPE THAT ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT SMITH IS FOUND SAFE AND SOUND. ALSO RECOMMEND CABLES TO LUZ Y FUERZA CUERPO GENERAL DE DELEGADOS, DEFENSA 453, CAPITAL FEDERAL, AND TO JUAN TACCONE EXPRESSING SUPPORT."

2. FYI, THERE IS STILL NO SOLID INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON SMITH'S WHEREABOUTS OR AS TO WHO HAS HIM. ARGENTINE ARMY LIAISON CONTACT WITH TRADE UNIONISTS ALLEGED TO LABATT YESTERDAY THAT MONTONEROS HAVE SMITH. HOWEVER, POWER WORKER LEADER TACCONE DISMISSES HYPOTHESIS THAT SMITH KIDNAPPED BY GUERRILLAS. TACCONE BELIEVES GUERRILLAS WOULD HAVE ASSASSINATED SMITH ON THE SPOT. TO
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THE CONTRARY, TRADE UNIONISTS GENERALLY BELIEVE THAT THE KIDNAP-

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 1/22/82
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ING BEARS THE HALLMARKS OF A TYPICAL JOINT OPERATION OF THE ARMED FORCES, INCLUDING THE USE OF THE TELLTALE FORD FALCONS. ADDITIONALLY, SMITH'S CAR REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN SPOTTED LOCKED IN A LOT USED BY POLICE AS DEPOSIT.

3. UNION SHOP STEWARDS ISSUED STRONGLY WORDED COMMUNIQUE DECLARING THAT "SMITH WAS KIDNAPPED BY AN ABSOLUTELY MINORITARIAN GROUP, WHICH IS NOT WORTH PINPOINTING AS LEFTWING OR RIGHTWING. THE RESULT IS THE SAME," I.E., TO PROLONG THE LABOR DISPUTE IN THE POWERS INDUSTRY, TO FOMENT VIOLENCE AND ANARCHY (AND, IMPLICITLY, TO DESTABILIZE THE GOVERNMENT). THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT AND THE SEGBA MANAGEMENT ALSO ISSUED COMMUNIQUES DEPLORING THE KIDNAPPING OF SMITH. IN PROTEST AGAINST HIS DISAPPEARANCE, POWER WORKERS IN THE GREATER BUENOS AIRES AREA WALKED OFF THEIR JOBS AGAIN YESTERDAY.

4. A NOTION GAINING CURRENCY IN TRADE UNION CIRCLES IS THAT SMITH MAY HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF "HARDLINERS" WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES WITH THE AIM OF PROVOKING A REINITIATION OF THE POLICE STRIKE WHICH WAS SUSPENDED JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE THE KIDNAPPING, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE THE INABILITY OF THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN LABOR PEACE. ACCORDING TO THIS THESES, THE END OBJECTIVE IS TO FORCE THE DISMISSAL OF VIDELA AS PRESIDENT AND OF GENERAL VIOLA AS ARMY CHIEF IN ORDER TO MAKE WAY FOR A MORE HARDLINING MILITARY GOVERNMENT. PLANTING MINISTER, GENERAL DIAZ BESSONE, IS SEEN AS A POSSIBLE BENEFICIARY OF SUCH A MOVEMENT, ACCORDING TO THIS LINE OF SPECULATION. HELPING TO FEED SUCH SPECULATION ARE REPORTS THAT VILA'S MEN HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN THE PAST WEEK ATTEMPTING TO DRUM UP TRADE UNION SUPPORT FOR VILA IN CASE VIDELA IS TOPPLED FROM POWER. END FYI.
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